

METROPOLITAN COMMISSION OF SEWERS.

WHEN the court determined that the business should be examined and arranged by the general committee, previous to each meeting, so that "any discussion which was necessary for the information of the public would take place in court," or rather as they ought to have said, "so that no discussion necessary for the information of the public may take place in court;" we saw what would be the result, and pointed it out.

To say that the commission hold an open court now is not true: the public meeting is simply *pro forma*, a blind and a pretence, and without assuming that any but the most careful and intelligent management is being pursued, we at once formally protest against the system as being full of evils, and certain to lead to an unsatisfactory state of things.

At a meeting held on the 9th, Lord Ebrington in the chair, and other commissioners present, the following resolutions were passed without discussion:—

"1. That it appears that the plan submitted by Mr. Cubitt to the Commissioners for Westminster in November, 1847, and on the recommendation of their surveyor, Mr. Phillips, approved by them, which provided an escape for the sewage through the outfall there shown into St. George's sewer, was not executed. That the officers of the commissioners charged with the superintendence of the work allowed the said plan to be materially deviated from; that they allowed the sewer to be blocked up with a wall, in what was there described as the direction of its outfall, and an outfall to be opened into Warwick-street sewer, where none was described in the said plan. That for these alterations and deviations no authority is to be found in the records of the court.

"2. That the best thanks of the court be given to Professor Lyon Playfair, for his very valuable services, rendered gratuitously to the commissioners, in the chemical examination he made, with so much skill and judgment, in reference to the lamentable accident that occurred in the sewer in Kenilworth-street.

"3. That though the commissioners have not sanctioned, and do not sanction, the application made to Dr. Ure for his opinion on the subject of the accident in the Kenilworth-street sewer, Fimlico, yet, as it appears that one of their officers did, during the interval which elapsed between the termination of the old commission and the first meeting of the present, apply to him and request a chemical examination of the contents of the sewer, they, under the circumstances, will not object to pay Dr. Ure some reasonable remuneration for this first analysis so requested by their officer on his own responsibility.

"4. That the commissioners be summoned, and the city commissioners be requested to attend the next court, for the purpose of taking into consideration the plans sent in for the drainage of the metropolis."

Adjourned to Friday, the 23rd.

Miscellaneous.

EFFECT OF BAD DRAINAGE.—The verdict given by the jury of the coroner's inquests held on recent cases of cholera in Hertford County Gaol, attributed the ravages of the epidemic to the total want of drainage, and requested the coroner to write to the visiting magistrates, drawing their attention to the subject. It appears that the soil-drains connected with the gaol run into two large close cesspools, one of which is within and the other without the walls, and that the prisoners are exposed to the injurious effects of the noxious gases generated in those cesspools. The coroner, therefore, in compliance with the wish of the jury, drew the attention of the visiting magistrates to these facts, and suggested that the cesspools should be done away with, and a proper system of sewerage established. We have the impression that a large sum of money had been spent here recently in putting things right.

SHEET METALS.—Mr. T. D. Jackson, of Brooklyn, New York, has patented an improvement in alloys for sheet metals, consisting of—Copper, 64 oz., zinc, 22 to 26 oz., India tin, 1 to 4 oz. The inventor claims as his invention or discovery, "the application of the manipulations employed for compounding an alloy of metals in the proportions and of the materials mentioned for a new sheet metal, which shall be capable of being wrought in the cutting press, with dies," &c.

PROJECTED WORKS.—Advertisements have been issued for tenders, by 3rd December, for the works required in construction of a quay and sidings near Arundel, for the London, Brighton, and South Coast Railway; by 11th December, for the erection of a new savings bank at Witham; by 12th December, for the erection of a new pauper lunatic asylum, for 250 patients, at Bracebridge, near Lincoln; by 3rd December, for the construction of two reservoirs near Langley, Prestbury, with other works connected therewith,—also a filter bed and service reservoir,—and for laying about 2½ miles of pipes, all for the Macclesfield borough water-works; by 24th inst., for gas fittings in the Brentford Town-hall; by 27th inst., for 200 tons of Barlow's patent wrought iron rail, for the Midland Railway Company; by a date not specified, for the erection of some small houses at Itchen (Southampton); by 21st, for a supply of British iron for the East-India Company; and by 15th December, for a supply of pumps and water closets for the navy.

DRAINAGE OF TOWNS ON TIDAL RIVERS.

—A suggestion for the drainage of London has been made to us by Professor Hanco, on the part of Mr. Goldsworthy Gurney. "The current of the Thames, in round numbers, at London-bridge," he remarks, "runs down 7 hours and up only 5 every tide; in winter more, in summer less, depending on the amount of river water. It runs at a rate of about from 5 to 7 miles per hour (no matter what the speed; let us suppose it to run at the same rate up and down for our present purpose). It is plain that anything thrown into, and forming part of the Thames at high water, would, in seven hours, be carried more than 40 miles down the river. On the return of tide, in five hours, the full time of flow, it will only have come up 30 miles, and at the time of high water would be 12 miles below the bridge. The next ebb would carry it 42 miles further down the river, or 54 miles below London-bridge. At the return of next high water it would be left 24 miles down the river, thus descending 24 miles in 24 hours, until it went clear into the sea. If, on the contrary, anything be thrown in at low water, it will go up with the tide for five hours, be five hours more in returning to the same spot, have only two hours ebb before it meet the flood coming up, and of course would return with it, go again up the river, and be seen probably every day for a week." Mr. Gurney suggests, therefore, that the sewage of London be collected, and only allowed to run into the Thames at high water, so that it may be at once got rid of. All this, however, is not quite so clear as it looks.

VENTILATED SEWERS, CHESTER.—I observe, at page 492, of your journal, that Mr. Thorpe, of Hull, states that he has adopted the plan of connecting the rain-water spouts in the fronts of the houses in that town with the sewers, for the purpose of ventilating them. I beg to state that system has been adopted at Chester for some years, and that I suggested it nearly three years ago in the pages of your journal. Although probably not so effective in its nature as Dr. Gurney's steam jet, it is a simple expedient, inexpensive and effectual in its operation. At the heads of our sewers, when we have what is termed dead ends, I have had vertical shafts or manholes carried up, for the purpose of securing self-acting flushing tanks, in principle resembling Hosmer's, and I purpose obtaining a supply of water from the main, so that whether the supply of water be constant or intermittent (as it is in this case), the sewers will be regularly and effectually flushed at stated intervals. When the flushing apparatus is complete, I connect the shafts with pipes to the fronts of houses, so that when in action, the regular downward current of the flushing waters will create an upward current of what little foul gas may be generated in the sewers; so that it will pass off through the ventilating shaft at the head of the sewer, and be disseminated in the atmosphere.

TESTIMONIAL TO MR. CUBITT.—Mr. G. R. Ward has been selected by the committee to engrave, for distribution to the subscribers, Mr. Pickersgill's excellent and life-like portrait of Mr. Thomas Cubitt. It is to be executed in the mixed style, and finished in June next.

THE SAMARITAN SOCIETY OF ENGLAND.

—This society, which originated in a paragraph published last year in our paper, proposes to establish cheap lodging-houses and dormitories for the necessitous poor under the arches of the metropolitan railway viaducts, open to all, at all seasons. "The arches in each district will be formed into first, second, and third class compartments for men; first and second for women. These tenements will be warmed with hot water, lighted with gas, be well ventilated, and be placed under the supervision of the police. The first class will be furnished with iron bedsteads, flock mattresses, blankets, &c., and the charge will be 2d. per night, or 1s. per week. The second class will be fitted up with slanting boards, such as are used by soldiers in their guard-rooms, with pillows and warm rugs; and the charge will be 1d. per night. The third class will be merely furnished with clean straw, and will be accessible to all, at all times of the night, without charge. These will be opened only in the winter. Five arches will at first be rented in each district. The centre arch will be furnished with a boiler, and will be used as a lavatory. The two arches on either side will be converted into first and second class wards,—those on the right for men—on the left for women; and each tenement will shelter 30 individuals. Each district will thus furnish 120 beds; and it is confidently expected that they will be self-supporting when once established." The society have views beyond this, such as opening schools in the day time, and to assist in reclaiming prisoners, but these are less immediately practicable. As the winter is approaching, now is the time to begin the work. Plans, we understand, have been prepared; and it is estimated that each arch may be fitted up for about 600. Rightly managed, this society may do an immense amount of good at small cost.

SURVEYOR'S TENDERS: ISLEWORTH ASSESSMENT.—I frequently see in your paper the heading "Blind Builders." There are, however, other men who are sometimes equally blind. As a professional man, I cannot account for such discrepancies. In this parish (Isleworth) we have 3,125 acres of land, varying in rental value from 2s. 6d. an acre to 100. 10s. an acre, and including about 1,500 houses. It has been determined to have a re-assessment. Advertisements have appeared from the board of guardians for making such re-assessment, and fourteen tenders have been sent in. You must excuse my not giving you the names of the different candidates; the lowest, however, is 50%, and the highest 420%. Such things are monstrous. I cannot think either Cocker or Columbine can have been consulted.—W. A.

SHOP DOOR BOLTS.—With reference to the circumstance that a watchmaker was robbed of two watches a few days ago by a pretended customer, who darted out of the shop with the property while he turned his back to get other goods to show him, a correspondent suggests the use of a sort of double night bolt, which may, by the application of ordinary bell-hanging work, be made to drop down from over the double inside doors when shut or a single bolt for one door of any shop where small valuables are sold, at the will of the person behind the counter, and altogether unseen by the party presenting themselves, and thus effectually prevent the escape of any one with the goods.

INSTITUTION OF CIVIL ENGINEERS.—In accordance with a new arrangement, the session of the institution commenced on Tuesday evening last—Mr. Joshua Field, president, in the chair—instead of, as heretofore, in the middle of January. The paper read was a "Description of the Cofferdam at the Grimsby Docks," by Mr. Charles Neate. The length of the coffer-dam was 1,300 feet, supporting at high water a head of water of 25 feet, whilst the excavation behind it was carried to 11 feet below low-water. The form of the dam was that of a circular curve, with a versed sine of 200 feet, or nearly one-fifth of the span.

THE ROYAL PAVILION AT BRIGHTON.—It is understood that the Pavilion at Brighton has been purchased for a sum nearly amounting to 60,000. The valuables of the interior have been removed, and it is expected that the place will be converted into purposes for the improvement of the town.